



PEETERS

"SOME GREEK AND ARABIC WORDS OF THE BYZANTINE PERIOD IN THE ARMENIAN
"GALEN DICTIONARY""

Author(s): John A. C. Greppin

Source: *Byzantion*, 1986, Vol. 56 (1986), pp. 108-116

Published by: Peeters Publishers

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/44160986>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Peeters Publishers is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to
Byzantion

JSTOR

“SOME GREEK AND ARABIC WORDS OF THE BYZANTINE PERIOD IN THE ARMENIAN *GALEN DICTIONARY*”

By and large, the Greek vocabulary of the Greek-Armenian *Galen Dictionary*⁽¹⁾ is the language of Galen's *Simples*, a lengthy tract dealing with pharmaceuticals, mostly botanic. The Dictionary contains about five hundred Greek terms, written in Armenian script and glossed by their Armenian equivalents. In addition to these Greek terms there are nearly fifty Arabic words⁽²⁾ of the same semantic ilk, also glossed by their Armenian equivalent.

The dictionary seems to have passed through two or three stages of organization ; we possess the last two but the first stage is entirely lacking. This first stage is suggested through internal evidence, revealed by the way the later stages of the dictionary are alphabetized⁽³⁾. In addition, it is also clear that certain parts of the dictionary were added later, after the first group of Greek pharmaceutical terms had been glossed. These later additions include, surprisingly, about thirty Greek bird names⁽⁴⁾ and the fifty Arabic entries. We know these words were entered later because they are in considerably better orthographic repair than shown in what would be the older portion of the dictionary ; words of that section, the bulk of the vocabulary, are frequently in such a poor state of repair that some entirely evade

(1) “*Bark' Gałianosi*”: *The Greek-Armenian Dictionary to Galen*, John A. C. Greppin (ed.), Caravan Books, Delmar New York, 1985.

(2) “The Arabic Elements in the Armenian ‘Galen’ Dictionary”, John A. C. Greppin. *Revue des études arméniennes*, XIX, 1985.

(3) Certain words, when reconstructed, prove to be filed in the wrong alphabetical slot. The entry *famaf*, appearing in the section for initial *f*-, was incorrectly copied, and is really Arabic *ithmid* ‘antimony’. Its insertion under *f*- implies that the dictionary was alphabetized after *ithmid* was corrupted to *famaf*, for had the alphabetization already existed, its force would have prevented the shift of initial *i*- to *f*-.

(4) “A Bouquet of Armenian Birds for Edgar Polomé”, John A. C. GREPPIN, *Language and Cultures : Studies in Honor of Edgar C. Polomé*. Mouton, The Hague, 1986.

reconstruction, both on the part of the Armenian gloss, and on the part of the Greek entry.

The original stage of the *Galen Dictionary* might stem from as early a date as the sixth century ⁽⁵⁾, though a later date is not excluded; the second stage of the dictionary cannot be dated much earlier than the tenth century, for that was the time when Arabic culture ⁽⁶⁾ began to assert a strong influence on Armenian medical thought.

In this dictionary there exist some lexical items of special interest: Gk. *νημία* 'lament'; *ἀγγούριον* 'cucumber'; and Arabic *jarjâr* 'horse-bean' and '*al*isfâqun 'sage'. It is these four words that I wish to discuss, for they have a sparse distribution, and one even, in the instance of *jarjâr*, has not been precisely identified before in Arabic.

1. ARAB. '*ALISFÂQUN*

This word appears in the *Galen Dictionary* ⁽⁷⁾ glossed by Arm. *k'arajanj* 'sage'. The Arabic word, which is more commonly spelled as '*al*al'isfâqun was originally a loan word from Gk. *ἐλελίσφακος* 'sage'. What is unusual here is the spelling of the Arabic term, for it

(5) Literacy in Armenian has existed since the earliest fifth century, following the translation of the Bible from Greek. In the sixth century, a school called the Hellenizing School made an effort to translate Greek words, frequently secular, into Armenian using an original syntax modeled closely after Greek syntax.

(6) The Arabs had little knowledge of Greek medicine until Ḥunain ibn Ishâq (d. 873) translated much of Galen into Arabic, bringing about a renaissance in Arabic medical thought. It was following this that the Armenians expressed an interest in Arabic medicine. Av. G. Ter-Poghosian (*Biologiakan mtk'i zargaçumə hayastanum*, Yerevan, 1960, pp. 291 ff.) doubts that there was much Arabic influence before 1040 AD. But if the Armenians had been influenced by pre-Galenic Arabic thought, still no influence would have been felt before the late seventh century, and the Armenian recognition of the sovereignty of the Arab caliphate in 651. Here see L. A. OGANESJIAN, *Istorija mediciny v Armenii*. Yerevan, 1946, vol. II, 210.

(7) This word appears, as did *ithmid* in note 3 above, in a state of disrepair. All manuscripts which list this word (Yerevan, 533, 534, 535, 540, 268) write *pitrigēn*. Yet we have another example of initial *p*- being the equivalent of *al* (*al*rasan = Gk. *πράσσον* 'leek'), a reasonable confusion within the Armenian alphabet. The Armenian *-itri-* is also a reasonable corruption of *-isfa-*, when the Armenian letters are considered. The re-establishing of the correct orthography, and even the identification of the terms was impossible in about 20 percent of the case, so energetically has this lexicon been miscopied.

is well known and commonly used in Classical Arabic, especially in medical texts with the reduplicated beginning *'al'al-*, conforming to the Greek original. However, the form recorded in the Armenian **Galen Dictionary**, *'alisfâqun*, is a logical form, for one can readily see how the first *'al-* was interpreted as the Arabic definite article, and separated from the stem. As it is, the mother term, Gk. *ἐλελίσφακος* is very good Greek, appearing in Galen's *Simples* (Kühn XI.873) ; it is composed of the root *ἐλελίζω* 'to whirl around', a reference to the appearance of 'sage', and *σπάκος* 'sage-apple *Salva calycina* ; moss'. Ar. *'alisfâqun*, found in the *Galen Dictionary*, was hitherto known only from one other source, the Latin version of Serapion Junior's ⁽⁸⁾ (fl. 1070) *Kitâb-ad-adwiya al-mufrada*, known as the *De medicinis simplicibus*. There are a good number of published translations, the first of which appeared in Milan in 1473 ; there we find the following entry :

elisfacos : in latio est salvia

"*Elisfacos*, which is 'sage' in Latin". And in the Venice text of 1552, translated by another medieval scholar, we have :

Aelisfacos, seu elisacos ⁽⁹⁾, *Arabibus, Gk. ἐλελίσφακος, salvia latinis.*

"*Aelisfacos*, or *elisacos* in Arabic and *ἐλελίσφακος* in Greek, is 'sage' in Latin". And in various other editions ⁽¹⁰⁾ we read the entry :

Aelisfacos in latino est salvia

"*Aelisfacos* is 'sage' in Latin".

(8) Serapion Junior is known in Arabic as Yûhanna ibn Serâbî and it is thought that he was a Christian, though there is no proof. The *Kitâb-al-adwiya al-mufrada* was unquestionably more successful in its Latin version than in the original Arabic, and it was considered for some time that the *De medicinis simplicibus* was not originally an Arabic work. However, George Sarton (*Introduction to the history of Science*, Baltimore, 1931, vol. II, 229) states that Arabic fragments are known.

(9) The spelling *elisacos* is, I think, a typographical error for *elisfacos*.

(10) The National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland, holds a goodly number of editions of this popular work : Milan, 1473 ; Venice, 1479 ; London, 1525 ; Venice, 1530 ; Strassburg, 1531 ; Venice, 1550 and Venice, 1552. The entry for *(a)elisfacos* is item 154, though the 1473 edition is not only unpaginated, the items are unnumbered. I wish here to thank the librarian of the History of Medicine Room, Mrs Dorothy Hanks, for her intelligent help.

And in as much as these Latin translations of Serapion Junior's *De medicinis simplicibus* consistently for each entry give the Arabic first, followed by a Latin gloss and then a discussion of the value of the *materia medica*, we can acknowledge that the initial term, a variant of the more common 'al'alîsfâqun and spelled in Latin script as *elisfacos* and *aelisfacos*, was an accepted form for the Arabic word for 'sage' in the tenth century and following. The Armenian *Galen Dictionary* provides a second citation for this word outside the *De medicinis simplicibus* of Serapion Junior and thus provides support for this variant of 'al'alîsfâqun hitherto known only in a single text.

2. GREEK *NHNIA* ⁽¹¹⁾

The uncommon Greek word *νηνία* 'lament', known in various Latin authors from Plautus to Sextus Festus, appears in the *Galen Dictionary* ⁽¹²⁾ glossed by Arm. *sug* 'grief' ⁽¹³⁾. Its use in Latin is straightforward and revealing. Cicero in the *De legibus* and Horace in his *Odes* are of particular value. In the *De legibus* (2.24.62) we read :

cui nomen nēniae, quo vocabulo etiam apud Graecos cantus lugubres nominantur

"The word *nēneia* is given to this (song), a word that among the Greeks signifies a funeral song".

And in Horace (*Car.*, 2.1.38) :

*sed me relictis, Musa procax, iocis
Caeae retractes munera nēniae*

"But, shameless Muse, lest play be abandoned and you turn to the gifts of the Cean dirge".

The word is clearly marked as Greek, and Horace places it squarely on Ceos, in the Cyclades. In the Loeb edition of Cicero's *De legibus*, C. W. Keys, the editor, says that the Greek word is "unknown to us",

(11) An extended paper on this entry will appear in the *Annual of Armenian Linguistics*, vol. 7, 1986.

(12) Gk. *νηνία* appears in Armenian letters as *ninēs* (Y. 268) and *nenes* (Y. 4149, 534, etc.), quite close indeed to the expected *nēnia*.

(13) Other than the gloss *sug* 'grief', we have readings of *sut* 'truth' (Y. 4149, 535) and *sag* 'goose' (Y. 536, 529, 2335), but there is no way to twist *ninēs*/*nenes* into a word for 'goose', and 'truth' would not be a sensible part of this dictionary.

a statement he would not have made had he looked in E. A. Sophocles' *Greek Lexicon to the Roman and Byzantine Periods* ⁽¹⁴⁾, where we find a reference to John of Lydia, a 6th century bureaucrat under Anastasius, Justinian and perhaps Justin II, during whose reign he died in 570 AD. There we read ⁽¹⁵⁾ : λέγεται δὲ παρ' αὐτοῖς τὸ ἐπιτάφιον νηνία, ἐξ Ἑλληνικῆς μᾶλλον ἐτυμολογίας, ὅτι νήτην τὴν ἐσχάτην τῶν ἐν κιθάρα χορδῶν Ἕλληνες καλοῦσιν. "The funeral dirge is called *nēnia* by (the Romans), which rather has a Greek etymology, because the Greeks call the last chord on the cithara *νήτη*."

The use of *νηνία* is not of great value here, for one would think, from our knowledge of John of Lydia's life ⁽¹⁶⁾, that he might well have come across *νηνία* in his Latin readings, rather than as a part of his normal Asiatic Greek speech.

But the use of *νηνία* in the Galen Dictionary (and it is surely known from the earliest level of the Dictionary), seems to be fairly clear evidence that *νηνία* 'lament', though it does not appear in the Galenic corpus, was a part of Asiatic Greek medical vocabulary ⁽¹⁷⁾.

Words that would appear to be cognates of *νηνία* crop up in sources that would suggest an ultimate Phrygian origin. Hesychius lists : νηνιάτος ... Φρύγι[ε]ιον μέλος ('a Phrygian song'). And in the scraps of the sixth century BC poet Hipponax we read : τὸ δὲ νηνιάτος ἐστὶ μὲν Φρύγιον "but *νηνιάτος* is Phrygian".

There is no Indo-European root *nēn-* (or *nen-*) listed in Pokorny's *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, and the word is also unknown among the Phrygian scraps left to us. But *νηνία* appears to be likely a word of eastern origin, and possibly through loan a part of Asiatic Greek. Its appearance in the *Galen Dictionary* lends weight to this.

(14) Second edition, Cambridge, 1887. Reprinted Ungar, New York, 1957.

(15) In : IOANNES LYDUS, *On Powers or The Magistracies of the Roman State*, Anastasius C. Bandy, ed., Philadelphia, 1983. The quote is found in Book I, sec. 33 ; in this edition, p. 50. In the Bonn 1837 edition, the passage is found on p. 146 of the *De magistratibus*.

(16) John of Lydia was the foremost classical scholar of his era, and we can assume that, because of his work on the Roman Empire, he was familiar with the works of Cicero, Horace and others.

(17) For surely grief is an emotion of a physician's patients that the physician must learn to deal with.

3. ARABIC *JARJĀR*

Though Moritz Steinschneider made, between 1897 and 1899, a thorough study of all Arabic pharmaceutical terms ⁽¹⁸⁾, and identified in that work numerous words that hitherto had not appeared in any lexicographical study, it is doubtful that he got them all.

An entry in the *Galen Dictionary*, *jarjar*, is glossed by Arm. *manra-hat baklay* 'horse-bean (*Vicia faba* var. *equina*)'. Clearly a word with initial *j*- cannot be Greek, but the shape of this particular word implies that it could be a legitimate Arabic form. It appears without spelling variation in eight manuscripts ⁽¹⁹⁾; its Armenian gloss, too, lacks any significant variations, appearing only as *manrbakla(y)* or *mandrbaklay*. Since the orthography is so consistent it is probable that *jarjar* is one of the later additions to the *Galen Dictionary*, and of Arabic origin.

There is support for such a structure internally within the Arabic language. There we find reduplication in numerous plant names: *mišmiš* 'apricot', *qulqul* 'wild-liquorice', *baṭḡbaṭ* 'knot-grass', *gharghār* 'wych elm'; and to these reduplicated forms we could add *jarjar* from the *Galen Dictionary*, which would be Arabic *jarjār*.

4. GREEK *ATTOYPION*

Though the Byzantine word *ἄγγούριον* 'cucumber' is infrequently recorded (*σίκυς* [= Classical *σικυός*] was more commonly used), its meaning is well established. It has some obscure cognates, among them being the Hesychian-noted *ἄγγουρα* ... *ῥάξ, σταφυλή* 'grape, bunch of grapes'; and the word is continued into Modern Greek as *ἄγγούρι*, also 'cucumber'. In the Cretan dialect *ἄγγουρος* flourishes lewdly as 'young man' and there are, fascinatingly, Middle Eastern correspondences. Persian sports *'angur* 'bunch of grapes' which semantically conforms well with the Hesychian gloss. Arabic has *'ajūr* 'hairy cucumber (*Cucumis melo* L. var. *Chate* Naud)' ⁽²⁰⁾; Armenian

(18) "Heilmittelnamen der Araber", appearing in the *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*. Vol. XI, 1897, 259-278, 311-330; Vol. XII, 1898, 1-20, 81-101, 201-229, 319-334; Vol. XIII, 1899, 75-94.

(19) Mss. Y 266, 529, 535, 2335, 3201, 3197, 4149.

(20) In Edward W. Lane's *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 5 (1874), we read that *'ajūr* also is used for some immature fruits, 'green' fruits.

reports *ačur*, also a 'hairy cucumber', a word in the Western Armenian dialect pronounced [*aʃur*] and clearly a direct loan from the Arabic.

We thus have two lexical traditions for the stem *a(n)gur-*: 'grape' and 'cucumber'; the former supported by Hesychius and Persian, while the latter appears in Byzantine Greek, Arabic and Armenian. The Greek word is cited variously, but always late. The earliest certain date is in Constantine Porphyrogenitus (905-959), in his *De administrando imperio* ⁽²¹⁾: *Τετραγγοῦριν δὲ καλεῖται διὰ τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸ μικρὸν δίκην ἀγγουρίου* "And it is called *τετραγγοῦρις* because it is long-shaped like a cucumber'.

A second and clearly post-tenth century usage is in the Greek translation of Ahmad ibn Sirim's (fl. 813-833) *Oneirocritica* ⁽²²⁾, where we have the following dream interpretation: *Εἰ δὲ ἀγγούρια, εὐρήσει πλοῦτον ἄπιστον*. "If it is the cucumber, he will come upon untrue riches".

There is also a medical tract of uncertain authorship that is undatable except for a dedication to Constantine Pogonatus (fl. 668-685). That this represents the date of the composition cannot be surely known; rather, the name of Constantine Pogonatus might have been attached to the work by the author of the tract, or a later copyist, to enhance the value of the work. One cannot say. The passage reads: *καὶ μᾶλλον ὅταν περὶ τὴν ἔψησιν σκληρότερα γένηται, ἀγγούρια, πεπόνια*, "And all the more when they become still harder from boiling: cucumbers and gourds" ⁽²³⁾.

The appearance of *ἀγγούριον* in the *Galen Dictionary* cannot be part of its earliest, possibly sixth century level, for *ἀγγούριον* is glossed by *xīar*, an Arabic loan word into Armenian. The entry again must be no earlier than approximately the tenth century. Armenian does not bring us an earlier usage of this word, but rather tends to confirm the lateness of *ἀγγούριον*, making a seventh century citation, through the dedication to Constantine Pogonatus, seem less likely.

(21) In the edition of R. J. H. Jenkins, Dumbarton Oaks, 1967, the term appears on p. 136. In the Bonn edition of 1840 it appears on page 138.

(22) *Oneirocritica*, Regalt, Paris, 1603. Chapter 243, page 223. Found with the *Oneirocritica* of Artemidorus Dalianus. The original Arabic of Ahmad ibn Sirim's text has been lost.

(23) Found in F. Z. Ermerin, *Anecdota Medica Graeca*, Leiden, 1840. Reprint Hakkert, 1963.

There is a question of the origin of Gk. *ἀγγούριον*, and generally we must think of it as a Mediterranean word ⁽²⁴⁾, one that flourished originally with a primary meaning of “*(young) green vegetable”, and thus took the value of ‘groupe’ on the one hand, and elsewhere ‘cucumber’.

But if Gk. *ἀγγούριον* and Arabic *‘ajūr* are part of the same system, it remains to explain the differences in the words’ phonetic shape. The existence of Greek *gamma* for Arabic *j* does not represent a true problem ; Greek had no [j] and *gamma* was a reasonable alternative within the Greek orthographic tradition. And if the word came earlier into Greek from a Semitic language, it could have come before the shift of pre-Arabic *g to j (here note Heb. *g’dḏī*, Aram. *gadjā*, Akk. *gadū* ‘nanny-goat’, but Arabic *jady* ‘goat’) ; then there is no phonetic problem.

It is unlikely that the Arabic word is a loan from Greek, for we would then have to explain how Arabic took the shape *‘ajūr*, and we could in no way derive, from a Greek original, a sound which approached an Arab *‘ayn*.

The sequence -γγ- = [-ng-] requires the more difficult explanation ; it might have been simply an orthographic effort to match the double consonant in Arabic, or perhaps it was a solution to the question of how to provide a parallel to Arabic initial *‘ayn* ⁽²⁵⁾.

We cannot wholly explain how Gk. *ἀγγούριον* is transferred from Arabic, yet it seems most improbable that the loan was the other way around.

(24) There is a goodly amount of Semitic vocabulary in Greek, and part of it is listed in the proper index of Frisk’s *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. The problem was first dealt with at length in Heinrich Lewy’s *Die semitischen Fremdwörter im Griechischen*, Berlin, 1895. Different views on this ‘Mediterranean’ vocabulary are still developing, and the new theories of Thomas GAMKRELIDZE and V. V. IVANOV, *Indoeuropejskij jazyk i indoeuropejcy*, Tbilisi, 1984 (1985) detail Semitic vocabulary in Indo-European languages on pages 1225-1227 in the index of volume 2.

(25) The word has elsewhere been discussed in P. Kretschmer’s review of Γ. Χατζιδάκις, *Μικραὶ συμβολαὶ εἰς τὴν ἱστορίαν τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς γλώσσης*, in the journal *Ἀθηνᾶ*, XLI.3-24, appearing in *Glotta*, 20, 1932, 239-240. Here Kretschmer acknowledges the Hesychian and Arabic cognates. He also tries to draw a parallel from what he calls “entwickelte γ” that appears in *ἄγουρον* ‘youth’, which he sees arising from *ἄωρον* ‘unripe’. But few would agree today, if then.

It seems that we have a Mediterranean word, with an original value of '(young) green plant' ; its earliest development as 'grape' is seen in Hesychius and Persian ; there is a later tradition that appears first in Arabic, and extends to Greek and Armenian, all with the value 'cucumber'.

These four words, uncommon within the Byzantine era, are a curious part of the *Galen Dictionary*, and reflect its use of Asiatic Greek vocabulary, and its use of some uncommon Arabic terminology.

Cleveland State University.

John A. C. GREPPIN.